

**Tuesday, March 31st, 2020**  
**Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent**

**Collect for the Day**

Almighty God, through the incarnate Word you have caused us to be born anew of an imperishable and eternal seed: Look with compassion upon those who are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant that they may be built as living stones into a spiritual temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Readings for the Day**

**Numbers 21:4-9**

4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea,\* to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup>The people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.’ <sup>6</sup>Then the Lord sent poisonous\* serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a poisonous\* serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.’ <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

**Psalms 102:15-22**

- 15 The nations shall fear your Name, O Lord, \*  
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
- 16 For the Lord will build up Zion, \*  
and his glory will appear.
- 17 He will look with favor on the prayer of the homeless; \*  
he will not despise their plea.
- 18 Let this be written for a future generation, \*  
so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord.
- 19 For the Lord looked down from his holy place on high; \*  
from the heavens he beheld the earth;
- 20 That he might hear the groan of the captive \*  
and set free those condemned to die;

21 That they may declare in Zion the Name of the Lord, \*  
and his praise in Jerusalem;

22 When the peoples are gathered together, \*  
and the kingdoms also, to serve the Lord.

### **John 8:21-30**

21 Again he said to them, ‘I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.’<sup>22</sup> Then the Jews said, ‘Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, “Where I am going, you cannot come”?’<sup>23</sup> He said to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.’<sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.’<sup>25</sup> They said to him, ‘Who are you?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Why do I speak to you at all?’<sup>26</sup> I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.’<sup>27</sup> They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father.<sup>28</sup> So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he,\* and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me.’<sup>29</sup> And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.’<sup>30</sup> As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

### **Reflection**

*‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he’*

One of the challenges both Jesus’s followers and his opponents face throughout the Gospels is that they so often misunderstand who he is, and what he is about. That question Jesus is asked in today’s gospel “Who are you?” appears over and over again. Jesus’s answers often are difficult for his listeners to make sense of. They don’t understand what he is talking about, or they attempt to make Jesus’s identity fit into whatever idea they already have of him. But Jesus’s responses to these questions point, over and over again, to his understanding of his mission. He is one who has been sent by the Father into the world, to speak as the Father has instructed him.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus points to his coming Crucifixion as the moment that will finally make his identity clear, that will allow everyone to see and understand that he is the Son of God. The Cross makes who Jesus is fully visible to us - the love he bears for the world, his willingness to go even to death for us, and finally the truth that he is the one who is able to win victory over death. In the words of one of my favorite Collects, “he stretched out his arms on the hard wood of the Cross, that the whole world might come within the reach of the saving embrace”

As we look toward a Holy Week that will be different than any of us have ever experienced before, it can be easy to forget that basic reality of God’s love for us that is made visible by the Cross. But whether or not we are in church together, whether or not we are able to gather and celebrate the mysteries of Holy Week and Easter, Jesus continues to reach out to us in love. Our work is the same as it is every Easter - to make that love visible in the world, in whatever ways we can, so that all can see Christ’s arms, ready to embrace all who come to him.

~The Rev. Martin Geiger